(c) whether Government would initiate action to cancel the Indo-Lankan Agreement signed in 1974 and 1976 unduly gifting 'Katchatheevu' to get a permanent solution to this problem; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There have been incidents of Indian fishermen allegedly fired upon by the Sri Lankan Navy. The Government has always taken up strongly such cases with the Government of Sri Lanka and emphasized the need for the Sri Lankan Navy to act with restraint and desist from firing on our fishermen. Sri Lankan Navy has denied responsibility in all instances. Keeping in mind the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of the issue, the Government has reached an understanding with the Sri Lankan Government on 26th October 2008 to put in place practical arrangements to deal with bonafide Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). As part of these arrangements, there will be no firing on Indian fishing vessels will not tread into sensitive areas designated by the Government of Sri Lanka along its coastline.

(c) and (d) The Government of India considers its maritime boundary with Sri Lanka settled under the Agreements concluded with Sri Lanka in 1974 and 1976. Under the Agreements, the Island of katchatheevu lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line. Both these Agreements were subsequently laid before Parliament.

Visit of US Secretary of State

1149. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US Secretary of State Ms. Condoleezza Rice visited the country, recently; and

(b) if so, the details of the bilateral and multilateral issues that figured in the talks with her and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Dr. Condoleezza Rice, US Secretary of State visited New Delhi on 4-5 October 2008. Secretary Rice met with External Affairs Minister and reviewed bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest and discussed the situation in the region. The two leaders noted that during the last few years, Indo-US relations has been considerably strengthened and intensified. Secretary Rice also called on Prime Minister and met with the Leader of Opposition.

Dr. Condoleezza Rice again visited New Delhi during 3-4 December 2008 to offer condolences for the victims of the Mumbai terror attack and express solidarity with India. She met with External Affairs Minister, Home Minister, Leader of Opposition and called on Prime Minister and conveyed the support of the US Government to India in its effort to fight terrorism.